

Order Instituting Rulemaking to establish the California Institute for Climate Solutions.

Rulemaking 07-09309808 (Filed September 20, 2007)

COMMENTS OF THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE ON DRAFT PROPOSED DECISION ESTABLISHING CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

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BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Order Instituting Rulemaking to establish the California Institute for Climate Solutions.

Rulemaking 07-09-008 (Filed September 20, 2007)

COMMENTS OF THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE ON DRAFT PROPOSED DECISION ESTABLISHING CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR CLIMATE SOLUTION

I. INTRODUCTION: CICS SHOULD SEEK PRIVATE MATCHING FUNDS AT 3:1

The Greenlining Institute (Greenlining) offers the following Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision Establishing the California Institute for Climate Solutions (CICS).

Greenlining believes this Commission has made California a national leader in addressing global warming and climate change. This proceeding is only another example of how the CPUC is continuing its commitment to meet what President Mike Peevey calls "the defining environmental challenge of our time." However, Greenlining disagrees that the Proposed Decision "adopts a bold and innovative approach" to meet this challenge.¹

The Proposed Decision falls short of meeting this Commission's own high standards of protecting and promoting the interests of California's underserved. Due to the looming economic recession, the establishment of CICS in its proposed form will likely exacerbate the financial harm on California's underserved communities. A CICS-imposed rate hike also forces ratepayers to pay for a venture that may not produce tangible benefits for California in the short or long term.

Therefore, Greenlining urges that the Proposed Decision be revised so that CICS is required to first attempt to secure private funding before squeezing ratepayers during a recession. Then, any subsequent use of \$600,000,000 in ratepayer funds should be predicated on obtaining

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¹ Draft Proposed Decision at 2.

matching private funds at a 3:1 ratio (*i.e.* \$1.8 billion in private funds), which is consistent with the standard set forth in the California Emerging Technologies Fund. Finally, California's 22 million minorities should be utilized not only as a workforce, but as direct beneficiaries of CICS.

II. RATEPAYERS HIT WITH \$600,000,000 TAX ON BRINK OF RECESSION FOR "HIGHLY SPECULATIVE" PROJECT

While the state is mired in a budget crisis and the economy is on the brink of a recession, CICS would impose an added tax on the utility bills of California's ratepayers. Reports are widespread that consumers should brace themselves for inflationary pressures on basic living expenses, including food, gas, and housing. Although this will create more pressure on public assistance programs to help California's low-income ratepayers, they will find little, if any, relief from public assistance programs. This is because Governor Schwarzenegger has repeatedly warned that vital public assistance to California's most vulnerable ratepayers may be severely reduced or even cut because of California's \$16 billion budget shortfall. Therefore, a CICS-imposed rate hike could not come at a worse time for California's low-income ratepayers.

A. Unanimous Concern Among Consumer Protection Groups

All of the consumer protection organizations participating in this proceeding, including Consumer Federation of California, Division of Ratepayer Advocates and The Utility Reform Network, have urged this Commission to re-think the prudence of CICS in its current form because it will definitely result in higher utility bills for the next decade and "could result in unnecessary ratepayer and taxpayer expenditures." The prospect of "unnecessary ratepayer and taxpayer expenditures" is especially worrisome since the Proposed Decision admittedly "cannot precisely determine the potential return for ratepayers." The Proposed Decision underscores

² *Id.* at 8.

³ *Id.* at 11.

that quantifying benefits for ratepayers is "highly speculative." Even UC's own Director of Policy, Wendy Streitz, emphasized that the proposed \$600 million in ratepayer funds would likely fail to yield even \$1 million in tangible returns through CICS.⁵

B. Secure Private Matching Funds at a Level Similar to CETF

It should be noted that Greenlining concurs with the Proposed Decision that this Commission should not be paralyzed into "inaction." The Commission must continue to ride and build on the momentum of the environmental movement. However, while government and consumers are all forced to tighten their belts to unprecedented levels, forcing ratepayers to bear the burden of a "highly speculative" project may ultimately harm this Commission's efforts to advance the environmental movement. Therefore, Greenlining urges this Commission to minimize ratepayer risk in this venture by first requiring CICS to attempt to secure investments from private sources before the imposition of a rate hike.

If the imposition of a rate hike is unavoidable, Greenlining suggests requiring CICS to secure private matching grants at a 3:1 ratio (\$1.8 billion), which is consistent with the standards set forth by the California Emerging Technologies Fund (CETF),⁷ prior to any expenditure of ratepayer-derived funds. Since CETF deems this 3:1 ratio as an attainable goal for even modest non-profit organizations, obtaining such grants for the University of California (UC), one of the largest and most prominent research institutions in the world, should also be an attainable goal. Expecting UC to first secure matching funds would be a more prudent approach to both

⁵ Streitz, Wendy, "Intellectual Property and the California Institute for Climate Solutions," Presentation of Policy, Analysis & Campus Services of the Office of Technology Transfer, University of California at CICS Workshop, December 12, 2007. According to Ms. Streitz, "Universities, on average, create one invention for every \$2.5M of research funding...If every penny of CPUC's \$600M were spent on research we'd expect about <u>240 inventions</u>. A two decade study of UC inventions shows that only 1 in 400 inventions brings in over \$1M over its entire life."

⁶ Draft Proposed Decision at 16.

⁴ *Id.* at 10.

⁷ http://www.cetfund.org/Investments/Overview.aspx

protecting and advancing the interests of ratepayers with the looming prospect of increased taxes. This approach would also be consistent with the Proposed Decision's assessment that "ratepayer benefit, in terms of dollar-for-dollar return on investment, will only be bolstered by the Institute's commitment to collect additional funding from private sources."

If CICS is unable to secure private matching funds at a 3:1 ratio, then this Commission should consider whether to suspend the ratepayer-derived funding of CICS. The Proposed Decision gives itself the authority to exercise that right by stating that the "Decision may be modified by the Commission at any time."

III. CICS MUST DO MORE TO MEET THE STANDARDS SET BY THIS COMMISSION TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE NEEDS OF THE UNDERSERVED

One of the main reasons why this Commission has been able to lead the fight against global warming and climate change derives from its unrelenting commitment to protect the underserved. A "bold and innovative approach" to combating global warming and climate change would harness this commitment while capitalizing on the environmental movement. Therefore a final decision in this proceeding must thus do more to address the roles and benefits underserved communities will have under CICS.

A. UC's Failure to Meet the Needs of California's Underserved Still at Issue

Greenlining highlights the Proposed Decision's assessment of why CICS must be more inclusive for California's 22 million minorities:

"Greenlining contends that since ratepayer money is drawn from all segments of society, the Commission must ensure that the benefits are realized by all segments of society, including low-

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⁸ Draft Proposed Decision at 12.

⁹ *Id.* at 4.

income and minority communities. Greenlining further argues that UC has historically been ineffective at reaching diverse and disadvantaged communities." ¹⁰

Despite Greenlining's urging that UC revise its proposal so that it is truly aimed at all Californians, UC has only responded that issues of diversity are "entirely irrelevant to this proceeding." (emphasis added)¹¹ UC's disturbingly obtuse attitude towards diversity and the resulting failure to create an inclusive proposal that benefits all Californians is reflective of UC's system-wide failure to represent the diversity of California. Moreover, UC's conclusion that diversity is "entirely irrelevant to this proceeding" is entirely antithetical to this Commission's leadership to meet the needs of the underserved.

B. GO-156 Should Apply to CICS

The Proposed Decision also misses the opportunity to capitalize on this Commission's own leadership on supplier diversity. While making no mention of General Order 156, which helped Pacific Gas and Electric become one of the leading corporations on supplier diversity, the Proposed Decision expects CICS grantees to purchase only generally from California suppliers. 12

Women, Minority, and Disabled Business Enterprises (WMDBE) are one of the fastest growing business sectors in California. This Commission has been a vanguard in reaching out to this group of business owners with GO-156. There is no reason why this order should not apply in this instance, with \$600,000,000 in ratepayer funds at stake. Therefore, a final decision should incorporate the standards and principles of GO-156 to encourage all grantees to purchase from suppliers who are not only California-based, but also reflect the population of California. That

¹⁰ *Id.* at 15.

¹¹ UC Reply Comments to PUC: Rulemaking 07-09-008 at 5.

¹² Draft Proposed Decision at 38.

is, CICS grantees should be strongly encouraged to purchase from minority-, women- and disabled-owned businesses.

C. CICS Must Invest in Underserved Communities to Take Ownership

The only substantive mentioning of diverse, underserved and low-income communities in the Proposed Decision was in the section detailing work opportunities. The Decision envisions CICS "providing job training to Californians, especially those from low-income, minority, and disadvantaged communities." Greenlining recognizes the Proposed Decision's efforts to at least be inclusive of underserved communities in CICS' impact on workforce development and job training. However, Greenlining is concerned that minorities are structured within the scope of this Decision only as tools for the Green movement rather than as beneficiaries.

While workforce development and job training should focus on meeting the employment needs of underserved communities, the involvement of these communities should not be restricted to tools for labor. A sustainable movement to fight climate change depends on the willing participation of ordinary citizens, not just the wealthy elite who install solar panels as a cheaper means to heat their pools and jacuzzies. Therefore, California's 22 million minorities, constituting a majority of this state's population, must be democratized as *direct beneficiaries* of CICS, not just as future installers of solar panels. One way this can be done is by promoting ownership of the environmental movement. For example, making the principles and standards of GO-156 directly applicable to CICS grantees would encourage more minority-owned businesses to own a stake in this Commission's efforts to fight global warming.

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¹³ *Id.* at 41.

In its current form, the Proposed Decision misses this opportunity. A final decision

should, thus, expand the role of low-income, minority and other underserved communities in

taking ownership over opportunities that are presumed to result from CICS.

IV. **CONCLUSION**

CICS asks ratepayers to pay for the "benefit" of speculative prospects at a time when

they can least afford to do so. Due to the unprecedented gap of this year's state budget and the

looming recession ahead, low-income ratepayers will be hit especially hard by the utility tax

imposed by CICS.

Before expecting California's most vulnerable ratepayers to bear the brunt of this tax, this

Commission should require CICS to first obtain private sources of funding. If the expenditure of

ratepayer-derived funding is unavoidable, CICS should first obtain matching private grants at a

3:1 ratio, which is consistent with the funding guidelines of CETF, before expending any

ratepayer-derived funds. Furthermore, this Commission should also implement the standards

and principles of GO-156 to invest in California's underserved communities as owners of the

environmental movement. Doing so will help alleviate some of the concern that CICS' main

impact on California's minorities will be a short-term tax for the long-term profit of others.

This Commission has demonstrated the value and importance of diversity on a myriad of

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occasions in numerous proceedings. It is Greenlining's hope that the CPUC will not miss this

latest opportunity to once again demonstrate its commitment to diversity. By amalgamating this

Commission's dual commitments to diversity and environmentalism, CICS can redeem its

potential to become an innovative vehicle benefiting all Californians.

Dated: March 3, 2008

Greenlining Comments on Draft Proposed Decision for CICS

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Robert Gnaizda Robert Gnaizda The Greenlining Institute

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VERIFICATION

I, Samuel Kang, am a representative of the Greenlining Institute and am authorized to make this verification on the organization's behalf. The statements in the forgoing document are true to the best of my knowledge, except for those matters that are stated on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe them to be true.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the forgoing is true and correct.

Executed this 3rd day of March, 2008, at Berkeley, CA.

/s/ Samuel Kang

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Nancy Welch, am 18 years of age or older and a non-party to the within proceeding. I am a resident and citizen of the State of California with a business address at the Greenlining Institute, 1918 University Avenue, Second Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704 and telephone number 510-926-4001.

On March 3, 2008 I caused the following document:

COMMENTS OF THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE ON DRAFT PROPOSED DECISION ESTABLISHING CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR CLIMATE SOLUTION

to be served upon all interested parties of record in R. 07-09-008 named in the official service list via e-mail to those whose e-mail address is listed in the official service list and via first class mail to those whose e-mail address is not available.

I certify that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed in Berkeley, California March 3, 2008.

	/s/ Nancy Welch
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